



PHOTOS BY MAURICIO LA PLANTE, KUNAL MEHTA, GABRIEL MUNGARAY AND WINONA RAJAMOHAN | SPARTAN DAILY

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Sept. 27 at Colorado College
Last meeting: W, 1-0

Sept. 29 at Air Force
Last meeting: W, 1-0

Oct. 3 vs. Boise State
Last meeting: W, 2-1 (SO)

Oct. 6 vs. Utah State
Last meeting: T, 0-0

Oct. 11 at U of Wyoming
Last meeting: L, 2-3 (OT)

Oct. 13 at Colorado State
Last meeting: W, 1-0

Oct. 17 vs. UNLV
Last meeting: W, 1-0

Oct. 20 vs. U of Nevada
Last meeting: W, 2-1

Oct. 25 at U of New Mexico
Last meeting: W, 1-0

Oct. 27 at San Diego State
Last meeting: L, 0-1

Nov. 1 vs. Fresno State
Last meeting: W, 2-1

The top 6 teams in regular season play will qualify for the Mountain West tournament, competing for a ring and a bid to the NCAA tournament.

By John Bricker
STAFF WRITER

Over the past five years, San Jose State has reinvented itself as a women's soccer powerhouse in the Mountain West Conference. As one of the most successful teams on campus, the Spartans look to defend their 2018 Mountain West championship this fall. Backed by a strong defensive line, the team set records for shutouts throughout regular season and tournament play, overcoming a rough start to the regular season. "Once we hit conference, it was like a quick 180 turnaround," junior forward and midfielder Bella Bowers said. "We had a hard time attacking at the beginning, but we definitely got into our groove and found our way to score." SJSU finished fourth in the Mountain West, setting up matches with Fresno State, Boise State and finally the University of New Mexico en route to the title. Assistant coach Tina Estrada said the team's win against Boise State in penalty kicks stood out as her personal highlight from the season. Regardless of how sweet that victory was, Bowers expects that the team's main competition this year will be Boise State. "I know that even in conference last year and even playing them in the semifinals it was just such a competitive game," Bowers said. "They want to beat us just as bad as we want to beat them." This season, the Spartans will have to recover from losing now-graduated goalkeeper Paige Simoneau, who earned the title of Defensive Player of the Week

LAST SEASON BY THE NUMBERS

Overall Record:
9-7-6

Conference Record:
6-2-3

Conference Finish:
4th

four times and Mountain West Championship Tour MVP twice during her time as a Spartan. Sophomore goalkeeper Ariana Romero has filled Simoneau's role and already demonstrated that she can serve as the team's defensive core. On Aug. 22, in her first game as a Spartan, Romero led her team's strong defense, producing a clean sheet during her season debut. It took facing No. 3 Stanford on Sunday for Romero to give up her first goal. SJSU hasn't had much success playing nationally ranked teams, losing to Stanford this season, and then-No. 2 UCLA in the 2018 NCAA tournament. As a personal goal, Bowers said she wants to build self-confidence on and off the field this season because she has struggled with that over the past few years. Freshman defender and forward Madison Toomer said experienced players have put her at ease by welcoming freshmen like herself. "It's definitely like a family here, which I love about this school and this team," Toomer said.

Assistant coach Estrada said the team's leadership works hard and stays positive. "That's something that I really admire about this program," she said. "The hard work that they have, and the belief that we're going to figure it out together." As an upperclassman, Bowers said she wants to lead and help new players get involved. "They are so willing to go out and do things and they want to get to know us just as much as we want to get to know them," she said. Balancing athletics and academics always challenges players more than anything else, head coach Lauren Hanson said, but the team has found balance wonderfully. "You are more successful the quicker you can figure out how to balance your time," Hanson said. Not all of the previous graduating seniors have left though, one SJSU alumna still helps train the next generation of players. After playing as a star goalie for the Spartans for four years and leading as team captain during her last season in 2015, volunteer assistant coach Zoe Makrigiannis joined the staff in 2018 to guide the team, including leading Simoneau to her 11 shutouts last season. But regardless of the result, the team ultimately knows there's a more important goal. "It is always a reminder for me to take a step back and know that that is the most important thing is enjoying it with each other," Estrada said.

Follow John on Twitter |
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Cora Wilson contributed reporting to this article.

Offense

Becerra ready to lead Spartan offense into battle

Defense

Senior captains record-setting defense

Coaches

The central driving force of the team on the sidelines



WINONA RAJAMOHAN | SPARTAN DAILY ARCHIVES

Senior forward Jamilecxth Becerra (left) led the entire Mountain West Conference in points last season but is more focused on team goals: winning another championship.

Striker ready for final season

By Chris Core
STAFF WRITER

The Mountain West Women’s Soccer Tournament Championship Quarterfinal is all tied up 1-1 against San Jose State’s despised rival, Fresno State. A close game with everything on the line begs for a hero to emerge.

For most players, the pressure can be overwhelming. However, for now-senior forward Jamilecxth Becerra, scoring game-winning shots comes naturally.

Sixty-seven minutes into the game, Becerra breaks free and gets a shot past the Bulldogs’ goalie, giving the Spartans their first victory en route to their Mountain West championship.

Along with clutch plays, Becerra brings a swagger on the soccer field that has always been a part of her play.

When she was 7 years old, she stepped up to her cousin’s soccer coach midseason and asked to join the team with no prior experience.

“Ever since then it was like a natural talent to me,” Becerra said. “You would always see me dribbling past all the other girls.”

Before Becerra made her decision to join SJSU women’s soccer, she finished as the 5th overall player in the California Community College Athletic Association at Modesto Junior College.

Coming out of community college with a strong soccer resume gave her plenty of schools to choose from.

But once Becerra met the SJSU women’s

soccer team, her mind was made up.

“I saw [the SJSU women’s soccer team] play and I was like, ‘I’ve never seen anyone play like this,’” Becerra said.

The star striker earned praise from her teammates quickly.

SJSU junior forward and midfielder Gabriella Hurtado said, “She is a silent little snake getting through the defense.”

The praise didn’t come without good reason. In Becerra’s sophomore year, she led SJSU in points scored. A year later, she led the entire Mountain West.

Although leading the conference was a major feat for Becerra, she has her mind set on team goals rather than personal bests.

“I’m just excited to get two rings,” Becerra said.

The team is coming off a Mountain West championship and with seniors like Becerra leading the newcomers, the coaching staff has high hopes for what can be achieved.

“They have a belief in them that they are going to carry over and continually get better,” assistant coach Tina Estrada said. “They have a positive mentality that they are going to grow as the season comes.”

With eight true freshmen and two red-shirt freshmen on the team, leadership from seniors like Becerra is key to another successful season.

Head coach Lauren Hanson thinks that every girl on the team brings their own support for one another.

“Don’t just rely on captains,” Hanson said as advice for her team, “Anyone can lead whether you are a freshman or a senior.”

Becerra did not hesitate to give her



She is a **SILENT LITTLE SNAKE** getting through the defense.

Gabriella Hurtado
junior forward/midfielder

CAREER HONORS:

- 2018 Mountain West Championship All-Tournament Team
- 2017 All-Mountain West Second Team
- 2017 Mountain West Newcomer of the Year

2018 STATS:

Games started: 22/22
Minutes played: 1,600
Goals: 5
Assists: 2
Shots: 52

approval of the new players as well.

“Out of my three seasons here, I feel like the freshman class this year fits in so much more with the team,” Becerra said.

Becerra knows that she has a leadership role on this team but still knows that she has room to improve when it comes to command on the field.

“On the field I feel like I need to talk more,” Becerra said, “I don’t talk as much as I should.”

She’s already began preparing for what to do after the freshmen take over the team and she’s walked across the graduation stage.

Wrapping up her degree in health science, Becerra looks to get accepted into a nursing program and pursue a career as a neonatal nurse or a pediatric practitioner.

While nursing is the goal for the soccer star, she isn’t ready to hang up her cleats just yet.

Becerra said she will look to continue playing soccer once she graduates, even if that means moving to Europe to compete.

Just as she did last season, Becerra is ready to put the women’s team back on top with another championship season.

“Hopefully I’m able to play like I used to play last season,” Becerra said.

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Brendan Cross and Cora Wilson contributed reporting to this article.

offensive players to watch



Jennifer Orozco
redshirt senior forward

With 6 points in 19 starts, she was named to the 2017 Mountain West All-Newcomer Team and has played in 23 matches over her career. In 2018, she played 75 minutes over three appearances, adding to her 19 starts in 2017.



Gabriella Hurtado
junior forward/midfielder

She started 30 of 41 games in her SJSU career, recording two goals and three assists in 2,340 career minutes. In 2018, she appeared in all 22 games, starting 14 of them, including all but one conference game.



Sabrina Weinman
freshman midfielder

Weinman played four years of varsity soccer at South High School, where she scored 15 goals and tallied 13 assists in her junior year. She received first team All-Area honors that year.



Sylvia Sloss
sophomore forward

It’s her first season with the Spartans after transferring from the University of San Francisco. In 2018, she appeared in 10 games, starting two of them, and tallied 240 minutes. She took 5 shots, two of which were on goal.

Captain's defensive squad sets records

By **Brendan Cross**
STAFF WRITER

The only thing tougher than winning a championship is doing it again.

“When you’re at the top, you always have the biggest target on your back,” senior defender Kristen Amarikwa said.

As a junior, Amarikwa and her stout defense lead the San Jose State women’s soccer team to their second Mountain West Conference title in four seasons.

Along the way, she helped the team tally 8 shutouts in conference play, a single-season record for the Mountain West.

In 11 regular season conference games, the Spartans only allowed 5 goals, 3 of which were in one game against Wyoming.

During the conference tournament, the defense came through when they were needed the most and continued to raise the bar.

In the quarterfinals, the No. 4 Spartans held Fresno State to just one goal and faced No. 1 Boise State in the semifinals.

The Spartans also kept Boise State in check, only allowing one goal.

SJSU shutout No. 3 New Mexico in the finals after they scored 5 combined goals in their previous two tournament matchups.

Individually, Amarikwa received a plethora of accolades, including being named to the United Soccer Coaches All-Pacific Region Second Team and the All-Mountain West First Team.

Amarikwa said she was initially excited when she was named to the first team but was then overtaken by a different emotion.

“It was more of a relief when I heard it,” Amarikwa said. “My hard work did not go unnoticed and it is always nice to get appreciated for what you do on the field.”

This season, Amarikwa hopes to see her team once again reach the mountaintop but realizes that every team they face will be giving its maximum effort.

“We need to make sure that we are still bringing our A-game because every team is now going to play their hardest against us because they want to knock us off the top,” she said.

Soccer runs in the Amarikwa bloodline. Her father first introduced her to the game when she was 7 or 8 years old and began playing in youth soccer leagues.

“My dad was my first coach. He threw me into every position—even keeper— wherever I could play,” she said.

And her older brother Quincy plays professionally for the Major League Soccer team D.C. United.

Amarikwa said that her brother has helped her throughout her entire career, particularly when he played for the San Jose Earthquakes between 2015-2018.

“Having that support nearby was really nice, getting advice, whether I asked for it or not,” she said. “He tries not to tell me what to do and that way I’m doing what I want to do but with the most knowledge as possible.”

Much like she looked up to her brother, Amarikwa’s teammates hold her in high regard.

Sophomore defender Jada Wilson said that Amarikwa is a role model for her and it’s going to be hard to not have her on the field when she graduates.



KAVIN MISTRY | THE SPEAR ARCHIVES

Senior defender Kristen Amarikwa led the Spartans’ defense to 8 shutouts in conference play in 2018, a single-season record in the Mountain West Conference. SJSU only gave up 5 goals in the remaining conference games.

““

We need to make sure that **WE ARE STILL BRINGING OUR A-GAME** because every team is now going to play their hardest against us because they want to knock us off the top.

Kristen Amarikwa
senior defender

“I’ve learned everything from [Amarikwa] as a defender,” Wilson said. “Her balance between being serious and having fun with the game is perfect. She is one of the best people I have ever met.”

When her college career ends, Amarikwa hopes that she gets the chance to play professionally while still pursuing her other passion.

“I hope to get that opportunity and to take it whether it is here or overseas,” she said. “And then still be able to do nursing, which is something I feel passionate about too. You can only play soccer for so long.”

In the meantime, it’s up to Amarikwa to lead the Spartans onto the field, looking to backstop another championship season. Her teammates are looking forward to it.

“She stands out, not just because of her height but because of how she talks on the field and how she directs,” Junior forward and midfielder Gabriella Hurtado said. “She is 100% a captain.”

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Cora Wilson contributed reporting to this article.

CAREER HONORS:

- 2018 United Soccer Coaches All-Pacific Region Second Team
- 2018 Mountain West Championship All-Tournament Team
- 2018 All-Mountain West First Team
- 2016 All-Mountain West Second Team
- 2016 All-Mountain West Newcomer Team

2018 STATS:
Games started: 22/22
Minutes played: 2,113
Points: 4
Shutouts: 11

..... defensive players to watch



Ariana Romero
sophomore goalkeeper

Romero is in the midst of her first season with SJSU and has the tough task of replacing the now-graduated Paige Simoneau. She transferred from Seattle University, where she finished her freshman season with a record of 9-7-1 in 20 appearances.



Jada Wilson
sophomore defender

Wilson received high praise from the Mountain West Conference as she was named to both the 2018 Mountain West All-Newcomer Team and the 2018 Second Team Mountain West All-Mountain West Team last season.



Karlee Pottorff
junior defender

She has made 13 starts in a total of 32 appearances for the Spartans. Pottorff scored her first career goal with Spartans last season versus the University of Nevada-Reno and played a total of 1,140 minutes as a sophomore.



Natasha Harris
junior defender

Harris started 38 out of 42 career games for the Spartans coming into her junior season. She started for the Spartans’ defensive line that recorded a school-record 11 shutouts last season, with 8 coming in conference play.

New coaching staff leads culture change

Star college athletes come back to train next generation of women soccer players



KAVIN MISTRY | THE SPEAR ARCHIVES

The SJSU women's soccer team celebrates with head coach Lauren Hanson by drenching her with water in 2017. Hanson won her 50th game on Aug. 29 using a coaching style that emphasizes building a culture of improvement. She tells her players to take one game at a time, a mentality that has led the Spartans to two Mountain West championships.

By Erica Lizarrago
STAFF WRITER

San Jose State's women's soccer team has won two Mountain West championships in the last four years, a feat they wouldn't have been able to achieve without the guidance of their all-female coaching staff.

Since she was hired in 2013, head coach Lauren Hanson has led the Spartans to a regular season championship, two Mountain West tournament titles and two NCAA tournament appearances.

Underneath Hanson, the coaching staff is composed of assistant coach Adrienne Fass, recruiting coordinator and assistant coach Tina Estrada, volunteer assistant coach Zoe Makrigiannis and director of operations Darriell Franklin.

Hanson credits the team of players and staff culture for their recent successes. Much of her motivation comes from watching the growth and development of the team she's helped craft.

"It's just watching players accomplish more than they think they can, and watching a team come together to develop a culture that's positive, hard-working and competitive," Hanson said. "To mix all three of those together is really challenging to do and I know our team does a great job of that."

After beginning her soc-



I left St. Mary's to be her assistant just because I knew how great of a coach [Hanson] was. I knew it was a waterfall opportunity to learn from **ONE OF THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY.**

Tina Estrada
assistant coach
and recruiting coordinator

cer career at an early age, Hanson went on to play for the University of Portland. She served as an assistant coach for the Pilots before coming to SJSU.

In 2017, she was also inducted into the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame and the University of Portland Hall of Fame.

Hanson was the winner of the NCAA Women's College Cup as both a player and a coach and worked with the University of Oregon as an associate head coach from 2009-11.

A seasoned veteran in the college coaching game with 16 years of experience, Hanson was named Mountain West Coach of the Year in 2017 and recently won her 50th game with the Spartans' 1-0 victory against Loyola Marymount University on Aug. 29.

SJSU's coaching staff emphasize a continual growth among their players and developing a culture of improvement—a mentality that led their team to double

digit shutouts in 2018.

"We try to look at one game at a time for us," Hanson said. "Every day [the team] comes ready to compete and that's one of our gifts here, regardless it doesn't really matter about the results, we just go out, compete and improve."

In 2015, Hanson appointed Adrienne Fass as assistant coach after serving the 2014 season as a volunteer assistant. Fass previously served as an assistant coach for Foothill College for five seasons where she oversaw three Coast Conference championships.

Her college career began at the University of Florida where she was named "Most Valuable Player" on her team. Fass' Gators won the 1998 NCAA championship after three previous NCAA tournament appearances.

Fass' duties include match preparation, player instruction and opponent scouting.

Hanson then went on to offer Tina Estrada an assis-



Lauren Hanson
head coach

tant coaching position in 2018 after three successful seasons coaching at Saint Mary's.

There, Estrada was named the National Assistant Coach of the Year in 2015 by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America.

"I left St. Mary's to be her assistant just because I knew how great of a coach [Hanson] was," Estrada said. "I knew it was a waterfall opportunity to learn from one of the best in the country."

Estrada, a Bay Area native, played for Santa Clara University who competed in the NCAA tournament all four years she was on the team.

It's this experience that Estrada incorporates into the Spartans' soccer program, pushing for a mentality of persistence among her team.

"I want our attackers to have freedom and creativity and be themselves," Estrada said. "But also, at the same time, just being relentless with their decision making."

Guided under Hanson's coaching from 2013-15,



Tina Estrada
assistant coach and
recruiting coordinator



Zoe Makrigiannis
volunteer assistant coach

volunteer assistant coach Zoe Makrigiannis joined the Spartans' staff in 2018 after being a four-year star goalkeeper for the Spartans with 17 career shutouts. She captained the 2015 team that saw its first Mountain West championship.

Now, Makrigiannis oversees the goalkeepers and guided last season's senior star goalie Paige Simoneau to 11 shutouts, tying for fourth-most nationally.

Franklin joined the team most recently after a four-season career under Hanson's coaching and graduating from SJSU in spring 2019. Franklin scored 20 goals during her career, including nine game winners.



Adrienne Fass
assistant coach



Darriell Franklin
director of operations

The coaching staff praises their team's victories from their players' leadership qualities and ability to enjoy the game, something Estrada said is refreshing as a coach.

"There can be a lot of pressure on performance but at the end of the day what this team is so good at is that they do it out of enjoyment," Estrada said. "It's always a reminder for me to take a step back and know that's the most important thing is enjoying it with each other."

Follow Erica on Instagram
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Cora Wilson contributed reporting to this article.

Editor's Note:

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